

120

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

An Address

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WILLIAM SPARROW, D.D.,

PROFESSOR IN THE INSTITUTION.

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DISCOURSE.

OUR doings here to-day may be very unimposing in appearance, and unimportant in the estimation of the world, yet in reality may have great significance and interest. All right-minded and large-thinking persons, who study the highest interests of men, the relations of the different classes of society to one another, and of all to the other world—together with the many and complex causes which go to make up the great sum total of human lot and destiny—must see and feel that what vitally concerns the ministry of the Gospel must have an interest wide as the world and lasting as eternity. Religion lies at the foundation of everything good and noble in individual man and in human society, and the ministers of religion, therefore, must be a class of men with whose character and principles the welfare of the world must rise or fall.

“*I magnify my office.*” It deserves to be magnified. Truth requires it; and, when rightly done, the act is as beneficial as it is true. I speak of the

office, not the office-bearer. The office-bearer needs not to be magnified by any special effort, whether of himself or others. There is abundant provision already made for that. Self-love and self-conceit will, spontaneously and without stimulation, do enough in that direction. And, aside from this, where there is real worth consistently manifested for a reasonable space of time, the person of the minister will, as a very general, almost a universal rule, meet consideration enough; and sometimes more than enough, even to the degree of silly fondness, and well-nigh profane idolizing. Who that has lived many years in the ministry with his eyes open, his self-consciousness awake, and his spirit jealous over itself for God's honor, will not be ready to acknowledge this? Yes; we would magnify the office, but not the office-bearer. When an inspired Apostle, laying down rules for all time, would secure to the persons of ministers a due regard and proper support, whither does he direct attention, and how does he shape his requirement? "*Esteem them very highly in LOVE,*" is his command. "*In love*": not in reverence, not in fear, but in the exercise of an emotion more accordant with the free, fraternal and tender spirit of the Gospel, and not so ensnaring to the object of it. And how clearly has history shown the divine wisdom of this prescription, and the pernicious consequences of not adhering to it! I need

not go to the banks of the Tiber, and to him who sits enthroned there, for an example. The humblest of his followers, the lowest of the secular clergy, so called, or of the regulars,—some bare-footed friar, if you will, with a rope round his waist, lazily begging his bread in misnamed charity;—all alike are objects to the people, not of intelligent love, but of superstitious dread. Where such ministers of religion abound, they are as a perpetual nightmare in the waking, as well as the sleeping hours, on the spirit of a people. In their presence the soul of the laity is bowed down. A craven superstition holds them in bondage. There is and can be none of the free movement and cheerful aspect which belong to a people swayed by affection in their intercourse with their religious teachers. But further, the Apostle, in exhorting to the exercise of love towards the ministers of CHRIST enforces the injunction by suggesting the ground or reason on which it should rest. “*Esteem them,*” says he, “*very highly in love for their WORK’S sake.*” *Work*, mark you: not office, not station, not dignity; *work*, meaning thereby, as Ellicott intimates, not merely the nature of the employment, but the diligence and faithfulness in discharging it. Out of these, as their root, would St. Paul have the affection of the people towards their pastors grow, and, growing out of these, it will always be adequate to reasonable

expectation, as well as free from fond and superstitious excess. He is not, so far forth, a true minister of CHRIST who would look for more.

Magnifying the office, then, not the officer (the latter will need no buttressing if the former is duly cared for), let us look, for a little space, at the nature of the Gospel ministry, what it *is*, and what it is *not*.

1. And first let me say, It is not a *profession*, as that term is commonly understood. It is constantly so called in common conversation, yet, as I conceive, perniciously. Altogether in a complimentary way, it is even set down as one of the “*learned*” professions; but the appellation is as deceptive as it is flattering. If, indeed, the office is chosen by the incumbent on the same principles that he would choose any other calling, or if it be chosen for him by others, and he is prepared for it and put into it at their instance and urgency mainly, it may very well be called a profession. But who does not see that in such a case there is a total perversion of the very idea of the ministry? So to treat it is to change it from sacred to secular, and put it in a class with those occupations which men of the world choose and pursue on worldly principles merely. But surely the ministry is not thus a profession. It is not for the natural man at all. It is not of natural origin, it is not pursued on natural principles, it does not seek natural ends. It is not

one of a large class of employments, all alike originating in the temporal needs of society and the principle of a division of labor; it is a class by itself. It is altogether *sui generis*. The occupation is of divine appointment, not natural growth or human invention. It is sought, if rightly sought, at the instance of impulses not looked for in any other case. We know on what grounds a man becomes a farmer or a physician, a lawyer or a mechanic. It is expected that he will confer with flesh and blood, and be regulated by expediency. So doing, nobody presumes to fault him. But in the case of the ministry, it is far otherwise. Whilst, in a negative way, certain prudential considerations may find place, they never can rightly be the initiating and controlling motive. No; not even will a *support* enter, in a substantive way, into the calculation of one who is considering the question, whether he will follow CHRIST in the ministry of His Gospel. It would be a sign of unfitness if a man were seen to be looking thus sharply for "a piece of silver and a morsel of bread." The principle by which a man is divinely led to seek this office, looks not back in this way, nor forward, either, to the flesh-pots of Egypt. One rightly called to this work takes it for granted, that if GOD employ, GOD will provide; and the conviction with him is not so much a logical inference as a gracious instinct. A

calculating spirit, which looks to what is falsely called “the main chance,” never could have produced the martyrs and confessors of the times of persecution ; nor ever will it, in the times of peace, produce the men who with power will witness to the truth as it is in JESUS. The true spirit of this calling asks, not “*What shall I eat and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?*” but “*What shall I DO?*” Yea, rather, “*What will the LORD have me to do?*” Under its control, the man throws himself without reserve into the Divine arms, takes GOD for his portion, says, “to me, to live is CHRIST,” and, as unto a ruling passion, gives himself up to the work of winning souls to Him. In all this we see, as certainly *he* feels, that he is not following in the way of the world ; that, on the contrary, he has come out of the world ; that, in the line of life he is pursuing, he is not obeying earthly instincts and considerations, but a divine call ; to say all in a word, and that from our Prayer Book, that “*he is inwardly moved by the HOLY GHOST to take upon him this office and ministry.*” But if all this be so, I am safe in the conclusion, that the ministry of the Gospel is not fitly or safely talked of as “one of the professions,” whether learned or unlearned, but something far above it, even a calling of GOD, peculiar and unique.

2. As the ministry is not, properly speaking, a

profession, so, much less, is it a *sacerdotal* caste, as many think it. This is the belief of the Romish Church, and the old Oriental Churches generally, and the error has been more or less the curse of Christianity, from a very early day. In one view it was a very natural error. Springing, as the Christian religion did, out of the midst of Judaism, which had a sacerdotal tribe, and surrounded as it was at its birth with Heathen sacerdotalism every where, it is not strange that there soon appeared in the Christian Church a strong tendency towards it. Every adult convert to Christianity was already imbued with the notion, and early habit must have inclined him to it. Besides this, while such was the position of the laity, the notion was a direct temptation to the *Clergy*. Their *official* consequence was largely implicated in it. They must have been more than men if they had not been greatly liable to its influence. Through the wisdom given unto him as an Apostle, St. Paul saw this ; whilst, as an observant man and self-observant Christian, he must have felt it. Accordingly, we find him reminding the Christians in the way of warning and prevention, that he and his colleagues were not meant to be “lords over God’s heritage, but ensamples to the flock”; not as “having dominion over their faith, but as helpers of their joy.” But alas, notwithstanding, the temptation proved too successful. Imitating the false, polytheistic sacerdotal-

ism of the Gentiles, and the mistaken sacerdotalism of the Jews, (for *it* was meant to extend to civil and ceremonial offences only: inspiration has said, that it was not “possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin,”)—imitating these priestly functions, partially false in the one case and entirely false in the other, the Clergy gradually set up in Christendom a sacerdotal claim, which went on developing itself till at length the ministry quite supplanted the Church, and became, in public estimation, the one exclusive channel of grace to sinful men; granting them regeneration by Baptism, *opere operato*; feeding them from time to time with the real body and blood of CHRIST, which they alone could create; receiving confessions in the intervals, and bestowing the pardon of sin, as souls might deem they needed it; and requiring men to be thus shrived, at least once a year, and especially at the last hour of life, if they would have any part or lot in the salvation of CHRIST. In this way, at length, was the population of the Roman empire brought to the feet of the ministry of the Gospel, now converted into a priesthood; yes, in this way was the heel of that priesthood planted on the neck of princes even, whilst no thunder that rolled through the moral world was so terrific as that which issued from the Seven Hills, no bolt that fell so destructive and blasting to every interest as ecclesiastical excommunication.

My words have had reference to the past, rather, but they are sadly true of the present also. Of course the principles which led to these deplorable results are still maintained by the old, unreformed Churches with unflagging zeal; but worse than that, though our fathers of the Reformation knew them not, except to repudiate and condemn them, have they not crept back, to some extent, into certain Protestant Churches, and there been made the pivot on which ecclesiastical being, power and virtue turn, the indispensable test and pledge, and mark of true Churchism and true Churchmanship? The fact is undoubted.

In the production of great moral effects, good or bad, there are always found a multitude of causes; and in taking a survey of these causes, you may begin with any one, and, starting from that, run through all the rest without breaking the line of your logic; and it may often seem a matter of indifference which you take up first. Accordingly, in accounting for that caricature perversion of Christianity, called Romanism, one man would begin with the power claimed of Forgiving Sin; another with Transubstantiation, another with Baptismal Regeneration, another with Infallibility, another with the Papal Supremacy, and so on; and each undoubtedly is a prolific source of evil, contributing its full quota without failure, and is intimately connected with all the rest. If, however, we were asked to point out

that which, through the person of the minister, underlies all these errors in common, sustaining them most effectually, and imparting to them their power of mischief, I think we should be bound by facts and logic alike to say, that it is the notion, now so incessantly pressed upon us, of what is called unbroken, tactual succession. It deserves to be called the tap-root of sacerdotalism. It is the cause which, combining the palpableness of matter with the subtlety of mind, acts as an effectual underpinning to the whole system of anti-Christian doctrine and practice. The theory is this. The Apostles were invested by our Lord with sole and plenary powers, and these powers they have conveyed to their tactual successors, constituting them a close corporation to the end of time, for the two-fold purpose of the government of the Church, and the conveyance of grace. This Church authority, and these influences of the Spirit, are both alike transmitted through a material channel and by an outward ceremony, in such a way, that if the continuity of the channel be broken, the precious contents are lost to the world ; and this, though multitudes in this society, thus supposed to be evacuated or emptied of its powers and virtues, still seem to love the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and to prove their sincerity by holy living and a Scriptural faith. Whilst, on the other hand, where this channel is supposed unbroken, *there*, though it be in the midst of

the dead formalism and superstition of the Greek Church, or the more active and virulent error of the Romish, grace and power, it is said, are possessed and conveyed in all the fullness of exclusive, covenanted mercy!

Such is the theory. I stop not to show how alien it is to the genius of the Gospel; how unspiritual, how mechanical, how enslaving; how antagonistic to that *παρρησία* which belongs to those who are brought nigh to God by a divine, not human, mediation,—to that freedom, that openness, that filial confidence, that humble boldness, that free-spokenness, (for by all these words is *παρρησία* rendered,) which must needs characterize those, who, fearing God as a loving and Holy Spirit with a spiritual fear, can consent to fear nothing beside. In a Reformed Church that theory is in a most uncongenial soil, and can be kept alive and active there, only by means which tend to the subversion of that Church. The incongruity is such as must, moreover, ever make it a “trouble” to the Protestant Israel. If they would have peace, true, internal peace, and real stability, they must rid themselves of it as something foreign to the body, like an irritating mote in the eye, or an enfeebling poison in the veins. In Rome, indeed, it is at home; *there* it is “to the manner born.” It tallies exactly with it—has a chemical affinity for—the doctrines of Infallibility, the *opus*

operatum of the Sacraments, justification and regeneration by Baptism, Tradition as a *principium cognoscendi*, priestly Absolution, the scholastic sense of the maxims, “*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*,” and “*Ecclesia in Episcopo*,” together with all those views which tend to externalize religion, and make men believe that the Kingdom of God is mainly and primarily not within us, but without us; and, lastly, it deprives the laity, as we see in the Church of Rome, of all substantive position and authority in the Church, rendering them mere cyphers, which add value, indeed, to the significant figures, but are of no value themselves. And for the very reason that this notion is consonant with the Romish system, it is discordant with the Protestant. It is, in truth, the iron sceptre by which Rome rules so despotically over the minds and bodies of men, and seeks to shiver all Protestant opposition to pieces, like a potter’s vessel. In the eye and light of this theory, of what account is a three-fold organization of the ministry, both diocesan and missionary; what worship in the use of a matchless liturgy that has received the approving suffrages of all high culture and true seriousness; what an orthodoxy unmistakably ratified by every page of the Bible; what an active and intelligent charity which extends its beneficent arms to the ends of the earth; what a deep, pure love to JESUS, such as the Apostle Paul

delighted to salute and greet wherever found? Alas, these are as nothing without the *pedigree*! You may have the exactest form of government that can be inferred from the Holy Scripture; you may have, to all human appearance, the spirit and power of the highest type of genuine religion; you may have men highly gifted and deeply versed in divine things, preaching the truth as it is in JESUS with a manifest unction from the HOLY ONE; but, lacking the *pedigree*, it is nothing; or, if this language be thought too strong, at best it is set down as a thing of suspicious appearance, very much like apples of Sodom, as Tacitus describes them, “black and empty.”

Succession in the ministry, thus maintained and pressed upon us, as it is, as a vital, constituting principle, is Romish, anti-Protestant, anti-Scriptural, anti-Christian, being the very strength of Sacerdotalism, and one element, I doubt not, in that complex mystery of iniquity which the Apostle saw beginning in his own day, and growing, though hindered somewhat, under his own eye. If my language seems strong in opposition to this notion, so is the language of its advocates in its favour; and if they presume to speak thus, discountenanced as they are by the great body of the Reformers, surely I may venture as far, sustained by their sanction.

Orderly induction into office, according to the established usages of the body, all approve and all

practice ; and any interruption of the usual course of ecclesiastical life and operation, except in the very extremest cases, in which Christians are compelled to throw away the casket in order to preserve the jewel—every one is ready to deprecate as a great calamity. But while a settled Scriptural system of government, and solemn and regular appointment to all offices in it, and a steady, not fitful maintenance of existing modes of acting in the Church, are one thing—the very thing meant by the Apostle when he demanded that all things should be done “decently and in order”—*pedigree*, as a peculiar virtue, imparting supernatural qualities to rites, and divine energies to persons, so that they shall convey grace as a conducting medium between CHRIST and his people,—ah ! this is another thing, a very different thing. This is it which converts the ministers of CHRIST into a vicarious, sacrificing body, mediating between men and CHRIST, very much as CHRIST mediates between us and God. This is it which furnishes a plausible basis for all such arrogant priestly claims. Sacerdotalism is its only complement. In these two things combined we see a fitting structure raised on a fitting basis. Without some such structure it seems to have no adequate final cause, but looks like some huge foundation laid without ulterior purpose, causing the passer-by to ask, “*Cui bono?*”

But I can tarry no more upon this point. I can

only reassert, that sacerdotalism, as a system of doctrine, and the theory on which it rests itself, are alike out of harmony with the nature of the Gospel ; and that our ministry, as it will not let itself down to a mere profession, so it with abhorrence refuses to exalt itself into a vicarious body, clothed with mediating powers and conveying grace by personal intervention and tactual succession, somewhat as water flows through a conduit, or electricity through a wire. GOD forbid that such notions should ever get possession of us ! The office and work for which we would fain make preparation in this place, is to be counted, as we deem, according to the Holy Scripture, not a *sacerdotium*, but a *ministerium*.

3. I have been denying certain predicates to belong to the Gospel ministry ; let me now assert what are its actual elements. Under the Gospel the ministry has two functions, and only two, that of *ruling* and that of *teaching*. Christianity wherever it exists, exists as a Society. This implies government, and government implies rulers, in their various grades and duties. In such government the Clergy naturally and by divine command have a large share ; but not an exclusive share. It is an evil day for true religion always, when the laity are supplanted and their part in legislation, administration and especially their control of Church property, is infringed upon. But speaking in general terms we

may say, that ministers are the rulers in the house of God. Congregations are formed, and Presbyters and Deacons are put at their head for government and discipline; and so dioceses are formed, and Bishops are set over them to govern in matters of more general and comprehensive interest, according to the precedents and principles of the inspired word, and the enacted laws of the Church. It is not necessary to speak of clerical *prerogatives* of whatever grade. To emphasize them and urge their zealous maintenance, would be quite a work of supererogation. Usurpation of clerical authority has not been the besetting sin of the laity in any age. History is our witness here. The temptation has been all on the other side,—the tendency in the other direction. The laity have not rebelled, but the Clergy have usurped. The greatest usurpation on record is of this kind. There is no bondage so deep and dreadful as spiritual bondage; and the worst the civilized world has ever seen, has been imposed through clerical pretension. The *Romish* hierarchy towers up in the world, before the minds of men, like the Great Pyramid in the desert of Egypt, with this peculiarity: that here the Pyramid makes the desert. As to *our* communion, if consistent with our principles, so far from being jealous of the laity, we shall look upon them as really constituting the Church, and being at the same time its chief defence.

Our fear is, not that they will encroach on clerical rights as set forth in Scripture, but that they will not, with sufficient promptitude, stand up for their own, and by so doing keep the Church, with “all the parts fitly framed together and compacted of that which every joint supplieth,” in divine symmetry, proportion and beauty, and in harmonious and beneficent action. Thus to hold back is their temptation; even as on the other side it is to encroach.

I do not think it necessary to prove from Holy Scripture that ministers of the Gospel are called to *rule*, because it is expressed or implied everywhere in the New Testament. If it were attempted, it would be enough to suggest, that in the text already quoted from the Apostle, it is *those who rule over them*, that the people are exhorted to “esteem very highly in love for their work’s sake.” Aside from this, however, and as a reason why we should regard the clergy as well secured in their rights, it is proper to be reminded that, in the *nature of things*, they must *needs* be so. Religion is an education, and he that educates necessarily rules. A people cannot be put into the hands of a minister to be trained in the things of God and the ways of CHRIST, and he not rule over them. The sceptre he wields is one of mingled truth and love, but still it is a sceptre. The very training in theory, is ruling in practice. The remark is curiously con-

firmed by the original and secondary meanings of such words as “magister” in Latin, and ποιμαίνειν in Greek, tending to show that the two functions are inseparable. Besides this, the fact that the clergy administer Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and thereby admit and continue men members of the visible Church of CHRIST, and that to them belongs this duty, on all ordinary occasions, according to the Holy Scriptures,—this *proves* that they are rulers, by *making* them such ; these sacred rites being accorded to individuals according to their judgment of their fitness. Ministers, then, are *rulers* in the house of God.

4. To proceed. Their one other function, as already said, is *teaching*. This of the two would naturally go first: I put it last designedly. It is every way the most important and most precious in itself, and this order suits my purpose best. Religion might exist in the world without organization, but not without true knowledge, and consequently without teaching and learning. Our religion is truth received into the intellect, thence transmitted to the sensitivity, and thence to the will, there developing itself in moral action—action which constitutes character before God and man. Christianity is a religion of truth ; meaning by that, not merely that it is the true religion, but that its power lies in the truth it promulges, and that, in-

strumentally, it has no power beside. It has some sort of power as an organization, as a social element, as a ritual drill, as a bodily exercise, as an esthetical something; but its *proper* power operates through the truth which it contains about God, and CHRIST, and the world to which we are going. All other things in it are powerful for good, only so far as they set it forth, and are permeated and fashioned by it. *Truth and the Spirit!* The one, deposited here on the earth in the Bible for all ages equally; the other, vouchsafed from Heaven, oftentimes before seeking, oftentimes after seeking, and oftentimes when not sought at all; and to be looked for in larger measure as the Church of CHRIST in larger measure becomes a praying Church. *Truth and the Spirit!* these two; the one as the *instrument* adapted to the rational and moral principles of our nature; the other the divine *Agent*, whose power is necessary to make that instrument effective, in the case of souls darkened by sin as are the souls of men. These two go together, and together constitute the subject-matter of the ministry, aside from its ruling function. With this view corresponds the language of St. Peter, when he required that others be appointed to serve tables: “*We will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word.*” So is our calling at the present day. The Truth and the Spirit are

both indispensable to the carrying on of the work of salvation on this earth, and there is preaching for the one, and prayer for the other. The Spirit is not deposited in us to be distributed at our pleasure. The HOLY GHOST is not dispensed through our fingers or our persons. Neither do divine influences run as in a river, we being the channel thereof. This best of all gifts to man is to be sought and obtained, not thus in the use of natural means, in and through material instrumentalities, in one word, mechanically ; but direct from Heaven, through the one Mediator and Intercessor, who ever liveth and waiteth in Heaven to be solicited for the blessing, according to His own word, "*Ask and ye shall have.*" This is all we are appointed to do, or without profanation can pretend to do, in reference to the Spirit. That men should desire any higher office than that of an humble petitioner, or even *think* of any other, is to be accounted for only on the ground of that deep depravity of the human heart, which is not withheld, even in the handling of the most sacred matters, from indulging its self-will and ambition ; at one time prying into and dogmatically determining topics which ought not to be touched, and at another intruding into positions which angels would not aspire to. Oh, the folly as well as the presumption ! Suppose there were no ruling powers connected with the ministry,

as there *are*; suppose no sacerdotal functions to belong to it, as certainly they do *not*; still what occupation on the earth can for a moment be compared to it, even in reference to its subject-matter merely? Some may possibly think that its ruling functions, in their greater and lesser spheres, are the prize most earnestly to be coveted. It is a low view, springing of an earthly spirit! The *powers* of the ministry pass away with the present system; but truth, the matter of the teaching function, shall never pass away. Powers are relational and temporary; truth intrinsic and eternal. Power, even in the heavenly hierarchy, much more in the ecclesiastical, may corrupt: truth never can. Instrumentally it is the ultimate, specific antidote to corruption of all kinds. If, then, the *ruling* function is the silver side of the shield of the ministerial office, the *teaching* function is the golden.

The angel which St. John saw, in vision, “flying in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell upon the earth;”—this, judging not according to the outward appearance, but to intrinsic and eternal relations, is a true emblem of the Christian minister as a preacher of the Cross. He is God’s herald, and announces God’s truth. What a mission and what a work! And how blessed the truth announced! We do not go forth like that other angel whom

the Apostle also saw, whose appointed cry was, "*Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth.*" We bring glad tidings of great joy, which are unto all people. To a sin-polluted and sorrow-stricken world we announce, on the authority, not of our office, for such authority has place only in administration, (where the single point is *truth*, there must be another basis),—we announce, on the authority of miracles and prophesy and various proofs, the common property of the world—proofs which testify the presence and sanction of the Almighty and All-wise God, that he is willing to receive his disobedient children back to his favour by his grace, through the redemption which is in CHRIST by faith. How free the gift: "*only believe!*" How full the blessing: "*all things are yours!*" How beneficent, therefore, the work, and how sublime the subjects handled! Sometimes, in favoured moments, when most in sympathy with the things of God and the upper world, our hearts catch some glimpses—enjoy some snatches of the priceless privilege and honour of spending our lives in preaching CHRIST as the Saviour of men, in proclaiming truths which are profitable unto all things—"truths that wake to perish never." But God alone can appreciate it rightly, as He alone can understand it fully: to *creatures* eternity will be ever revealing it.

(a.) In the ministry of the word two things are

to be aimed at, to *convert* and to *proselyte*. In contemplating our work as teachers in Israel, it is important at once to distinguish the two, and yet embrace both. Of the first, little needs to be said, but that little gives it peerless prominence. By *conversion*, we mean the turning of men to GOD, not in word, or outward gesture, or public profession, or symbolic representation, or external amendment; but in heart to GOD, in the reception of the truth and under the power of the Spirit. Short of this, Christianity falls short of its proper end. This end reached, it is a success. With nothing else, therefore, should the minister of Christ be satisfied. Content to aim at a lower mark than this, he is not to be counted a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST; he is only a soldier in the barracks, at most on the parade ground, not in the field. In the conversion of men it is, that CHRIST sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied, and in nothing else; and it is the minister only who keeps this idea ever uppermost in his mind, and labours earnestly and self-denyingly to this end, that in any sense or measure “*fills up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake which is the Church.*” The external machinery of the Church must be carefully and conscientiously worked. Baptism has to be administered, candidates for Confirmation presented, communicants enrolled, schools to be maintained, con-

ventions to be attended, reports rendered, and canons enacted ; but distinguishable from all this, underneath all this above all this, the essential end of all this, is *the conversion of souls*. Oblivion of this difference has, in all ages, been declension in the Church of Christ. Everything eternally valuable in Christianity is gone, when we practically forget in our ministry the truth to be gathered from the Apostle, analogically and almost in words, that “*he is not a Christian who is one outwardly, neither is that Baptism which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Christian which is one inwardly ; and Baptism is that of the heart, in the Spirit and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men but of God.*” The one great instrument appointed of God for the conversion of the world, is *the truth*—the simple truth as it is in JESUS. That is the sword of the Spirit,—a sword of heavenly temper and mighty power. All the legitimate ecclesiastical means and expedients just mentioned, rightly viewed, constitute only the sheath of that sword. The word of God it is which does the execution. It is a grievous error when men learn to rely on any other instrument. Vain is the resort to new measures, changing every day. Vain the pageantry of gorgeous vestments and long processions, and crosses and candles and incense, and postures and bowings and genuflexions. Vain the unnumbered æsthetical appliances, addressed to

the eye and the ear, and so gratifying to the pride of life. Neither is it by building up a mighty hierarchy, synod upon synod, “cycle and epicycle, orb in orb,”—hierarchies rivalling or aping, in the power claimed and the State affected, the kingdoms of this world; though multitudes are weak enough to suppose that CHRIST is thus honored and his mission accomplished. At the very best, these things are but as Saul’s armour to David, an encumbrance, and unreliable, to be put aside for the sling and the stone of the simple truth of God. Yes; it is the truth revealed to us in Scripture, touching the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in all their attributes and offices of grace and power and love towards the children of men, together with the sad contrasted truth of man’s depraved and guilty and helpless state by nature; it is by the steady, persevering and prayerful inculcation of this truth, that the proper work of the ministry is done, and men are truly converted unto God. This was the *original* means employed, and ever will be the *immediate, legitimate* means. And it will prove effective. Suppose the seed thus sown, and yet no harvest, for a long time, is reaped. It matters not. Let faith hold on. Let patience have its perfect work. Shall Saul sacrifice because Samuel does not come? We must wait the Lord’s leisure. He that shall come, will come. Labour is never in vain in the Lord. God’s

means may be trusted even to the end ; man's expedients not even at the beginning.

(b.) But I spoke of *proselyting*, as well as converting ; and what have Christian ministers to do with *that*? It is a word of evil association, of selfish odor, of Pharasaic aspect. Understanding by it the gaining of men over to our side, simply because it is our side, thereby reducing rival numbers and swelling our own, it is a hateful thing, the offspring of selfishness, and in a body meant to be spiritual not secular, and to accomplish high and Heavenly purposes, can only damage. The man who uses his office for such work, has come down from the character and functions of an ambassador of CHRIST, to that of what is called in mercantile phrase a *drummer*, seeking customers for one house or firm rather than another. Surely nothing can be more unworthy. But there is a less offensive sense in which proselytism may be taken, namely : the advocacy among the members of the Orthodox Protestant Churches, of their own denominational peculiarities. I say, Protestant *Orthodox* Christians. As to *heretical* bodies of professing Christians, as for instance those who deny the divinity of CHRIST, it would almost seem like treason to Him, to discuss with them, except it be in the most passing way, questions of discipline and usage ; and almost the same may or should be our feeling with regard to

the Church of Rome, which our own Homilies charge with the sin of idolatry, and many fearful perversions of the truth as it is in JESUS. With Orthodox Christians our differences are not by any means so vital ; but still they are differences, and differences great enough to keep us apart. This *necessitates* self-advocacy ; and the only open question is, as to the *mode* of doing it. Many a zealous supporter of a good cause has been its most dangerous opponent, and many a defender of the truth has by his indiscretion become a heresiarch. There is danger connected with all earnest advocacy, especially in matters personal and peculiar to ourselves, of running into erroneous extremes. Things work thus : We would persuade men, and accordingly bring forth our strong reasons. But they are not convinced, and therefore we would make our arguments stronger still, and so we go on enlarging their dimensions, multiplying their number, increasing our emphasis, and magnifying the importance of our view, till we have taken a position, it may be, and are found building defences and means of offence, altogether without and beyond the range of reason and moderation ; till we are startled, at length, if GOD give us ears to hear, by that voice from Heaven to Judah and Israel of old : “ *Go ye up upon her walls and destroy ; . . . take away her battlements for*

they are not the LORD's." The one great *antidote* against this grievous mistake, at once illogical and immoral, is to remember, that of the two parts named as constituting the teaching function of the ministry, proselytism, in its unexceptionable sense, is altogether subordinate to the other, namely : the preaching of CHRIST—the persuading of men to be reconciled to God. Really making this latter work the *main* business of our ministry, the other function will readily find and keep its place of secondariness and subordination. That prince of preachers, St. Paul, both by precept and example, hath taught us here. That we observe the proportions of truth upon this subject, both theoretically and practically, it is only necessary that we be thoroughly imbued with *his* spirit—that largeness of soul which made him a mighty power in the Church, and in the world. What a rebuke to that sectarian littleness of soul, and how intrinsically sublime, his declaration to those who would make minor differences of more account than fundamental agreements :—“*Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, CHRIST is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*”

I hasten to a conclusion. We see our calling; what, in some respects at least, it *is*, and what it is *not*. That any man duly sensible of its nature

and responsibilities, should seek to magnify its powers, is truly wonderful. In its native, Scriptural simplicity, merely as a ruling and teaching office in the Church of CHRIST, without one human addition of any kind, it is enough to tax all the powers, load the whole conscience, occupy the lifetime, and fill the heart of every true “man of God.” Quite within the inspired limits, indicated, then, let the office of the ministry be magnified, not assumingly before men, but in the soul of the minister himself, even to the uttermost. The office so exalted, the incumbent will be humbled; and with the diligent ministry of the word will be united habitual prayer and the hopeful, loving spirit which prayer produces. Thus furnished unto every good word and work, he will make full proof of his ministry. And whilst he will understand things far better than did John the Baptist, and carry his people much beyond that prophet in their knowledge of the gracious dispensations of heaven, yet in two points he will never surpass him. Like him, his business will ever be to point his people to the “*Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;*” and in this business he will, like him, ever regard himself but as a “*voice crying in the wilderness.*” Oh, what a thought! How impressive to the heart of the minister of CHRIST, whether at the beginning or the end of his career!

A voice! a mere voice! a voice that utters the great thoughts of the gracious God in this wilderness of sin and death; a *voice* whose echoes must soon die away here forever; but must go sounding on through the ages of eternity, in its mighty effects upon the souls of men in the world to come.